

The Harvest Mouse.

The harvest mouse, says *Chamber's Journal*, is one of those little creatures which, though spread over the greater part of Europe, very few persons may have seen. This is partly accounted for by its shy habits, its smallness of body, and quickness of movement. This elegant little creature is light orange brown on the upper parts, and white underneath, and is chiefly peculiar for the character of the nests which it builds, of which it has two kinds, one for summer and one for winter.

The summer nest, in which it rears its young, is generally found suspended at some height from the ground between stalks of corn or reeds three or four of the stalks being utilized as supports, and held in their places by the intertwining of their pedicles or stalk-leaves. The nest, when finished, is about the size of a cricket-ball, very neat and compact, the frame-work being formed of wheat leaves or such like, and described by Gilbert White as "most artificially platted." The interstices are comfortably filled in with moss; while a small round opening, only large enough to admit one's little finger, is left on the top to give access to the interior of the nest.

Within the circumscribed space thus inclosed as many as eight and nine young ones have been found at one time, and these so closely packed together that the rolling of a nest across a table could not dislodge them. There is little or no room for the mother inside; and how she manages to get so many little mouths filled from time to time is a wonder, as it seems impossible she can administer a teat to each. Here in this "pendant bed and procreant cradle," swaying to and fro as the summer wind stirs among the wheat, the little creatures guard and nourish their tiny offspring till they are ready to go forth and forage for themselves. So much for the summer nest; the winter nest in some important respects differs from this. The cutting down of the corn in autumn leading to the destruction of their summer residences, and giving the little inmates immediate notice to quit, they look about for a place where they may build a winter nest, to which in the cold season they may retreat. Professor H. Schlegel has just described these winter nests as he found them in a locality near Leyden in 1868. Here there was a ditch some quarter of a mile in length, and six paces in width, part of the border of which was grown over with reeds.

A careful examination showed that these reeds actually contained about fifty nests of the harvest mouse. These winter nests he found to be composed of various mosses. They were attached to and between several stems of reeds, exactly like the nests of the reed warbler, but more tapered in form, of from six inches to a foot in height, and from three to four inches in diameter. They showed no inlet, and were placed at the height of a foot over the water's level. The little creature, when entering, had to remove the upper part of the covering, which was less densely interwoven, and was concealed between the moss. It would seem evident that the building of these nests was a just calculation of being safe against the danger of drowning.

A Gypsies Cave.

The latest suggestion as to the whereabouts of all the diamonds recently stolen in England is full of romance. For more than one generation it has been known that the gypsies possess somewhere in the New Forest a cache, as the red Indians call the place where they conceal their store of winter food; but this cache is said to be far more than a mere hole for hiding baggage. It is a long subterranean passage leading to the sea. The entrance is known only to the members of one single tribe, many of whom reside entirely within its recesses. The place is regarded as a sanctuary, to which access may be obtained for any gypsy under the ban of the law, and if a gypsy can once reach the place he may tarry until "nothing further is heard" concerning it. He is generally assisted to escape to the sea shore, when he goes abroad for a time, to return again and commence anew. It is believed by some of the shrewdest of the police authorities that this cache is a sanctuary for stolen goods, in which the produce of many of the recent diamond robberies has been secreted, and from thence put on board vessels for America, Russia or Holland.

Boy Inventors.

Some of the most important inventions have been the work of mere boys. The invention of the valve motion to the steam-engine was made by a boy. Watts left the engine in a very incomplete condition, from the fact that he had no way to open or close the valves except by means of levers operated by the hand. He set up a large engine at one of the mines, and a boy was hired to work these valve levers; although this was not hard work, yet it required his constant attention. As he was working these levers he saw that parts of the engine moved in the right direction and at the exact time that he had to open or close the valves. He procured a strong cord, and made one end fast to the proper part of the engine and the other end to the valve lever; the boy had the satisfaction of seeing the engine move off with perfect regularity of motion. A short time after the foreman came around and found the boy playing marbles at the door. Looking at the engine, he soon saw the ingenuity of the boy, and also the advantages of so great an invention. Mr. Watts then carried out the boy's inventive genius in a practical form, and made the steam-engine a perfect automatic-working machine.

Bloodhounds in the Russian Army.

The Russians have strengthened their army by the novel addition to each company of a pack of powerful and carefully-trained dogs. These watchful animals are sent out with the sentinels on picket duty, where their sharp ears and still keener scent will prove an impregnable barrier to the lurking spies of the enemy. The dogs used are a species of bloodhound from the Ural Mountains. The dog is selected because of its habitual silence. It growls, but never barks, a matter of the first importance to soldiers near an enemy's camp. The Ural hound is gifted with an exceedingly fine sense of smell, keen ears, and is ever alert. Most comfortable of all to the lonely picket, the dog is said to be especially courageous in defending his master. It is curious that, with the example of the King Charles spaniels before us, no one thought before of using these intelligent animals as sentinels. The value of the plan is self-evident. The Muscovites have gone further, and are training swift hounds, as well as these same Ural dogs, to act as dispatch bearers—much as the carrier pigeons were employed in 1871. They certainly would be hard messengers to catch, when sent stealing through the woods at night.

AN INTELLIGENT APE.—A man of strict veracity relates these two facts, of which he was an eye-witness. He had a very intelligent ape, to whom he amused himself by giving walnuts, of which the animal was extremely fond. One day he placed them at such a distance from the ape that the animal, restrained by his chain, could not reach them. After many useless efforts to indulge himself in his favorite delicacy, he happened to see a servant pass by with a napkin under his arm. He immediately seized hold of it, whisked it out beyond his arm to beat the nuts within his reach, and so obtained possession of them. His mode of breaking the walnuts was a fresh proof of his inventive powers. He placed the walnut upon the ground, let a great stone fall on it, and so got at its contents. One day the ground on which he had placed the walnut was so much softer than usual that, instead of breaking the walnut, the ape only drove it into the earth. What does the animal do? He takes up a piece of tile, places the walnut upon it and then lets the stone fall while the walnut is in that position.

PROHIBITION IN MADAGASCAR.—The government of Madagascar not only forbids the sale of intoxicating drinks, but also prohibits the planting of the poppy for the production of opium, under a penalty of \$100 fine, or imprisonment. The use of hashish is also prohibited. The heathen are getting ahead of Christian civilization.

PRAIRIE STOVES.—In the Far West it is said stoves are used that burn hay. The hay is first packed in sheet iron cylinders, by which it is introduced into the stove. Several of these cylinders are kept on hand, so as to have a supply always ready. It is said to be more economical than burning wood.